

Howe Bible and Normal Institute, Memphis, Tenn.

Prof. Thomas O. Fuller, President

HOWE BIBLE AND NORMAL INSTITUTE had an interesting beginning. Missionaries employed by northern societies had been faithfully at work in Tennessee, trying to counteract the evils and vices growing out of slavery, and to check the indulgences that marred the lives of the newly emancipated Negroes. These Christian workers were making themselves felt for good in the Southland. They selected Memphis as a center of moral and religious influence, and, in one of the colored churches of the city, Howe Institute was established in 1888.

From the first many students were gathered, and the people in the immediate vicinity manifested much interest in the school. The pastor of the Baptist Church in which the school was organized went North for assistance, and succeeded in interesting the late Peter Howe and wife, of Illinois, whose sympathy for the Negroes of the South had already been aroused. By the generous gift of Mr. Howe, money was soon available to purchase a corner lot, and to erect upon it a large three-story brick building at a cost of \$10,000. Before the new building was completed, and before the work of the school was well under way, Mr. and Mrs. Howe were assassinated in their home. This was a serious blow to the school.

The property of Howe Institute is now owned and controlled by the colored Baptists of Tennessee, who select a managing board of fifteen trustees. In conveying the property to the school trustees, Mr. Howe provided that money should not be raised for its support by festivals or excursions. He also stipulated that no one should serve as a teacher or an officer of the institution who was addicted to the use of snuff, tobacco, or spirituous liquors as a beverage. Mr. Howe realized that these things were doing much damage to the Negroes, and he wished to set in motion forces that would counteract these evils.

Early Struggles and Triumphs

For many years the school had a hard struggle for existence, and at one meeting of the trustees a motion was made to close the school on account of embarrassing debts and lack of support.

This motion was not seconded, however, and the struggle continued. On account of its stand against snuff, tobacco, and spirituous liquors, a systematic boycott was inaugurated as hostility developed against the school. After ten years of doubt, darkness, and despondency, the day of hope seemed to dawn. Discriminations against them brought the people to a realization of the importance of helping themselves. Howe Institute was greatly aided by the growth of this spirit of self-help, and to-day, after more than twenty years of existence, the institution stands as a beacon light.

The school is located in the heart of a dense Negro population. Within easy access are more than one hundred thousand Negroes. Arkansas is just across the Mississippi River, and the state of Mississippi can be reached within fifteen minutes' ride from Memphis. These states have a large Negro population. There is one private school, besides Howe, of academic grade in Memphis. The public schools, on account of the hostility to the Bible in the schools, cannot do the work so sadly needed among the colored people, and Howe Institute splendidly responds to this great need. In addition to the normal and academic work of the school, preparing for college and teaching, the school teaches stenography, typewriting, bookkeeping, printing, carpentry, vocal and instrumental music, and domestic science. The ministers' course is a simple English course, arranged to meet the demands of ministers in the active pastorate, and to assist young men who have the ministry in view.

A Bible Training Class for Women

One of the most interesting features of the work is a Bible training class for women. In 1908 this class numbered 216, who came from 30 churches, and represented seven different denominations. They are given a systematic course in Bible study, arranged to suit their ability to comprehend the lessons. Personal purity, consecration of life, the care of the home, the children and the sick, work in church and neighborhood are given special attention. This class made the first contribution toward the girls' dormitory, now in course of construction.

During the last seven years the enrollment has increased from 250 to 729, industrial and other new features have been added; there are five buildings instead of one; the teachers' home has just been completed at a cost of \$2,000; the Women's Industrial Building, costing \$10,000, is nearing completion, and the value of the property has increased from \$20,000 to \$60,000.